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Letter dated 22 March 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation concerning the recent developments in Kosovo , Serbia and Montenegro (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gennady M. **Gatilov**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

04-28072 (E) 250304

Annex to the letter dated 22 March 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

20 March 2004

The leadership of the Russian Federation is deeply concerned over the developments in the situation in Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro. Provoked by extremists, the sharp flare-up of violence in this province has laid bare the policy deliberately being pursued by them of ethnic cleansing of the non-Albanian population of Kosovo, in the first place Kosovo Serbs.

Russia has repeatedly drawn attention to the danger of such a development. However the alarming tendencies that have been growing in the last few years have not received an adequate response from the international presences in the province — the United Nations Mission in Kosovo and the NATO-led forces for Kosovo. Today it has become definitively clear that the attempts at indulging the extremists from among the Kosovo Albanians have failed and created serious risks of destabilization of the entire region.

New refugees are joining the tens of thousands of members of non-Albanian population of Kosovo earlier driven from this province and living in conditions that do not conform to elementary standards. The hundreds of thousands of Serbs who were forced to leave other Balkan countries during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia are also practically forgotten. These flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms occurred and are occurring in plain view of "civilized Europe".

The Serbs remaining in Kosovo are seeking protection behind the walls of the churches and monasteries not yet destroyed in the province, but there too they do not feel protected from extremists bent on new outrages.

Under these conditions a simple numerical increase in NATO troops within the forces for Kosovo is not enough. These forces are duty-bound to take the toughest action to suppress the hotbeds of violence, protect the civilian population reliably and together with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo make the Kosovo Albanian leaders fulfil undeviatingly the demands of the United Nations Security Council regarding the principles for a Kosovo settlement. Until such action is taken, until the extremists are curbed, it is pointless to talk about the determination of the political status of Kosovo.

The tragic events in Kosovo directly influence the situation in all of Serbia and Montenegro as well. The large numbers within its territory of people torn away from their homes, and the big protest demonstrations in major cities, are seriously destabilizing the social and political situation, and distracting attention and resources from the solution of the immediate problems facing that country. Particular responsibility lies with the European Union, which took a direct part in

the elaboration of the principles on which the State of Serbia and Montenegro was established.

The Security Council must also have its say and insist on the implementation of its resolutions. Streamlined formulas are no longer suitable for that. It is necessary to call things by their correct names.

Russia, rendering at this stage additional help to the civilian population driven out of Kosovo, is ready for the closest active cooperation with its partners in the Contact Group and the Security Council and with the European Union in the interests of speedily ending the tragedy in the Balkans and placing the situation on the lines specified in the United Nations decisions.

We expect our partners in the Western capitals involved in the Kosovo settlement to draw serious conclusions from what has happened and to focus attention on a just solution of this key problem for Europe, avoiding double standards in the assessment of the state of affairs in different regions of our continent.